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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KHARTOUM 000956

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF/SE NATSIOS AND AF/SPG, NSC
FOR PITTMAN AND SHORTLEY

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM KPKO SU AU UN

SUBJECT: BASHIR TO UNSC: "THE BALL IS ENTIRELY IN YOUR
COURT NOW"

Classified By: CDA Alberto Fernandez, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a relatively cordial (compared to last year) meeting with UNSC PermReps, Sudanese President Al-Bashir underscored the GOS's full agreement on the Hybrid Force. He called for international pressure on recalcitrant Darfur rebel groups to become part of a viable peace process, a call that was well received by the PermReps. He also said that there was a tangible improvement in the humanitarian situation in Darfur since the signing of the DPA. He blamed the rebels for the lack of a ceasefire and remaining humanitarian problems. Bashir lamented the lack of donor commitment to the success of the CPA which places Sudan's future unity at risk. End Summary.

"THE BALL IS ENTIRELY IN YOUR COURT"

¶2. (C) Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir welcomed UNSC PermReps (including US PermRep Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad) to Sudan at the Council of Ministers. Accompanying the President were Foreign Minister Lam Akol, Senior Assistant to the President Minni Minawi, and Presidential Advisor Magzoub al-Khalifa. Bashir said that after the latest agreement achieved in Addis Ababa on the Hybrid Force that Sudan had done everything that had been asked of it. Implementation and funding were now up to the UN and AU. He noted that the situation in Darfur continues to improve as a result of the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) and that this would be accelerating with improving relations with Chad. He expects to be able to solve all outstanding problems with Chad soon and enjoy warm relations. He asked for UNSC help in convincing the non-signatory rebels in Darfur to join the political process and build momentum towards a definitive peace.

¶3. (C) UK PermRep noted that there are three tracks for success in Darfur: security, political ("no success without it"), and the humanitarian/economic. Citing progress on the first track with Sudan's unconditional acceptance of the Hybrid Force, the UK PermRep said that does put the onus on the UN in New York to move quickly to get a resolution, fund the force and make sure that the Heavy Support Package is put into place quickly. He agreed that more pressure needs to be placed on the Darfur non-signatories, saying that "we are not in the business of giving succor to the rebels) we have no favorites) that is not our role." He noted that there still needed to be improvement in access and security for humanitarian work. A ceasefire was urgently needed, saying "this applies especially to the rebels," but also to the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). He noted that the Council had been informed of the SAF and related militia burning down an entire village on June 9.

¶ 14. (C) The Chinese PermRep noted that "China is proud to be your friend and have such a friend in Africa." It is clear that Sudan wants peace and that Sudan is sincere and has shown this by its full acceptance of the Hybrid. He called for a ceasefire as an important measure to provide an impetus for enhanced humanitarian access and political process. He agreed that there needs to be pressure exerted on the rebel movements and not just on the GOS. He called on the GOS to exercise "maximum restraint" in its military operations in Darfur even if it is provoked by the non-signatories as seems to be the case.

¶ 15. (C) Ambassador Khalilzad added that what motivates the United States is stopping ongoing violence against innocents. The U.S. does not have a hidden agenda or vendetta against the Sudanese Government or people. The U.S. respects Sudan's sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity. But the international community cannot be silent in the face of the ongoing violence. This violence needs to stop. There was uncertainty about Sudan's commitment to the Hybrid and related steps but the U.S. has now been assured of Sudan's unconditional acceptance. The next step is implementation and this requires action by the UN and AU but also by the Sudanese. The Government must move expeditiously on the mechanics of implementation such as a status of forces agreement (SOFA) for the Hybrid similar to that for the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) in the south and that such procedures do not become excuses for delay. This applies equally to such issues as humanitarian access, physical security for internally-displaced persons (IDPs) and aid workers, and bureaucratic measures such as customs clearances and visas. Ambassador Khalilzad noted that as Sudan moves towards implementation, it has every right to expect that

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positive action on its part should lead to a positive response from others.

"PRESSURE HAS LESSENED ON REBELS TO NEGOTIATE"

¶ 16. (C) President Bashir noted that after the signing of the DPA, the Government had announced a ceasefire. Non-signatories, led by Abdul Wahid Nur) even though they didn't sign the DPA) agreed to the ceasefire, while the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) rejected both the DPA and ceasefire. There was no problem with the signatories and non-signatories who agreed to a ceasefire, the problem is with the faction that refused everything. There was supposed to be pressure on that faction (and sanctions) for refusing a ceasefire and that never happened. Instead all the pressure was transferred onto the GOS. He noted that there had never been any criticism or action taken by the UN, AU or other international players against JEM and that such silence had made the non-signatories more recalcitrant.

¶ 17. (C) Bashir insisted that the situation had improved in Darfur, noting that the World Food Program had seen the number of people in danger of a lack of access to food fall from 500,000 to less than 50,000. If there is lack of access and insecurity for aid workers, it is because of the rebels. The same rebels are seen carrying out their political activities in Europe without penalty. He reminded the visitors that only two months ago, "we announced a ceasefire and the National Redemption Front (NRF, the rebel umbrella group) refused and yet we are pressured while they are untouched. This is one of the biggest reasons that the Darfur peace process has been delayed." He recalled that "President Bush, a great man, had worked for the CPA and had called to thank us for the DPA and America worked to make this happen." Now, every time that Sudan takes a step forward it gets condemned by the United States and has unjust sanctions placed on it. The attempt to portray Sudan as the reluctant party is unfair.

¶ 8. (C) Bashir welcomed all efforts for peace, especially those led by UN and AU Special Envoys Eliasson and Salim. He fully admitted that "the solution in Darfur is a political one and not military." Darfur is relatively safe and secure he insisted. Yes, there are criminals, killers and robbers in Darfur but such people are also found everywhere, even in Washington. He suggested that intra-tribal and intra-rebel violence constitute the vast majority of the violence in Darfur today. Bashir added that the Hybrid is welcome in Sudan and the GOS is doing everything it can to reach out to the rebels) especially the civilian leadership) even though some in the rebel camp interpret the latest American sanctions as supporting the rebel side. He complained that Darfur has hurt the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) with the South. Oslo donors failed miserably in fulfilling their commitment to the CPA and this hurts the possibility of continued unity with the South. That is why American sanctions are so unfortunate given that the U.S. helped bring about the CPA. "We cannot convince southerners on unity given the GNU's limited resources as a result of sanctions." There are places in the South that were completely destroyed as a result of 50 years of war that need development. "How can we keep Sudan united in the face of such pressure as a result of sanctions," he asked, noting that unity means projects and development. A second time he stated that the Government of Sudan's acceptance of UNSC demands was unconditional and that the ball was now in the UNSC's court.

BASHIR: "WORSE DAY IN DARFUR NOW BETTER THAN IRAQ"

¶ 9. (C) Ambassador Khalilzad responded that U.S. sanctions were a result of the violence in Darfur. Many innocent people have suffered and continue to suffer. We respect Sudan's sovereignty but with sovereignty comes responsibility. The United States has contributed USD 2.6 billion to help the people of Sudan, especially in Darfur and in the South. There is an opportunity now for Sudan to surprise everyone by moving forward on the Hybrid, the ceasefire and political process. The non-signatories must be pressured to join the political process. That is a legitimate request by the GOS but there is much that the GOS itself could continue to work on such as facilitating humanitarian access.

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¶ 10. (C) President Bashir countered that the level of violence in Darfur is down. Yes, there are still armed rebels and levels of criminality but the level of violence is less than in Iraq or Afghanistan or Somalia. "The worse day in Darfur now is better than a normal day in Iraq, outside of Kurdistan." He cited UNICEF statistics that show that nutrition and health levels in Darfur are better than some other parts of Sudan. He noted that there are 15,000 aid workers now helping the people there; this shows the GOS' good will. He closed by asking the UNSC PermReps to keep the dialogue with Sudan open. He noted that with that support, peace can be achieved, a political process consummated and IDPs can return home.

¶ 11. (C) COMMENT: This was a vintage Bashir performance) a combination of one-part homespun honesty and two parts total duplicity with one sensible suggestion thrown in. His acceptance of the Hybrid was quite unambiguous and underscores the perception by many here that the GOS is counting on the UN's own slowness and clumsiness in implementing the heavy support package (HSP) and Hybrid as its best ally. His point on pressuring the non-signatories to engage in the peace process is worthy of attention and was well-received by the PermReps) much of the violence now is indeed rebel-related. But Bashir's rosy characterization of other issues such as the ceasefire and humanitarian situation

was mostly fantasy. His defensiveness on these important matters was quite plain. Unfortunately a nuanced view of Sudanese actions may have been lost in the palpable relief at the GOS acceptance of the Hybrid. The ensuing press conference featured two memorable phrases, the UK PermRep comparing the "much more positive" meeting this year with the last PermRep visit and the South African PermRep noting that "there is no sanctions draft before the Security Council and hard to imagine there could be after Sudan's full acceptance." End comment.

T12. (U) Ambassador Khalilzad did not have an opportunity to review this cable before departure.

FERNANDEZ